

HR Corner

Practical theorists

by Rachel Sproston



Wendy O'Brien,
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Photo: Keith Cheung

Health professionals embrace training initiatives as second skin

The terms "training" and "educational opportunities" feature as standard in human resources discourse today. The effective implementation of comprehensive training and educational policies however, does not necessarily follow original blueprints. One institution which sets itself apart in this regard is Matilda International Hospital where planning, implementing and undergoing professional training is an integral part of the hospital's everyday functioning.

Wendy O'Brien, deputy general manager, clinical operations, Matilda International Hospital, describes the current training programmes at the Matilda as comprehensive, specific and rigorous. "Non-clinical staff receive mandatory fire, infection control and moving and handling training. In addition, all frontline staff including housekeepers and receptionists are required to undergo cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training every year," she explains.

Every CPR course is tailored to the specific needs of individual departmental members: basic for housekeepers yet more comprehensive for clinically-trained staff, to ensure every employee knows exactly how to administer the best possible care and implement pre-planned procedures effectively.

Professional presentation

Frontline staff attend customer service training sessions to guarantee their soft skills are in line with client expectations. "Executives also receive crisis management training every year," says Ms O'Brien. This is an area of management which is increasing in importance as swift and planned responses are now expected in emergencies.

Beyond the frontline, clinical staff must also attend regular mandatory training sessions. "For each session an employee attends, we evaluate the course material and if appropriate designate a number of professional points which correspond to the complexity or length of the course content," reveals Ms O'Brien.

Practising nurses must acquire 15 continuing nursing education (CNE) points every year while midwives must acquire the same number of post-registration education in midwifery (PEM) points.

Non-registered staff also receive competency training to ensure they attain standardised levels in their respective areas of responsibility. "Initially, non-registered staff are supervised when performing specific duties. Once a member of staff reaches the desired level of competency in performing a particular task, we then witness that employee performing the task without support to ensure that it is carried out independently and professionally. Only then is the employee considered competent to undertake that task without direct supervision," Ms O'Brien explains. However all unregistered staff work under the direction

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of a registered practitioner at all times.

Education budget

Staff at the Matilda receive financial training support through a budgeting system which allocates funds on a departmental basis. Ms O'Brien elaborates, "We identify areas at the micro level where training would be beneficial and our staff attend courses to bridge the gap. The hospital hosts several seminars every year while we also encourage staff to visit local hospitals to learn about their implementation of new machines, procedures or policies." Employees can also benefit from overseas training, following which the Matilda organises a post-seminar sharing session where concepts discussed overseas can be explored with departmental peers.

"Our ongoing education plans are devised a month prior to delivery," says Ms O'Brien. This ensures the content is both relevant and topical. Five to six sessions feature every month, usually on a thematic basis focusing on core objectives and competencies. Most lectures and workshops take place on site around three to four o'clock in the afternoon as staff are switching shifts. "We try to make it as practical as possible for staff to continue learning new skills," she notes. Staff are required to give feedback as to the efficacy and practicability of every course.

Meanwhile, Matilda provides a host of web-based learning tools which complement the in-house training sessions provided. A sharing system, the Electronic Knowledge Gateway, is also in place and it allows access to the Hospital Authority's online databases. This exposure to best industry practice is especially helpful when new machinery is installed. Health professionals can offer comprehensive feedback as to the practicalities of using the machine and interpreting the resultant data.

Regarding standards, a robust clinical governance strategy is in place at Matilda which encompasses quality control, standards maintenance, clinical effectiveness, audit and evaluation, risk management and customer feedback. "As an institution we don't consider the administration involved in setting and adhering to high standards additional work because our ethos and daily practices are structured to incorporate professionalism and accountability," she concludes.

Salient points

- Training specific to individual staff members
- Regular education sessions well in place
- Educational budget for every department
- External accreditation ensures standards

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